

EXTENSIONS OF REMARKS

A TRIBUTE TO THE HONORABLE
RUBY BUTLER DEMESME

HON. BOB ETHERIDGE

OF NORTH CAROLINA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, January 31, 2001

Mr. ETHERIDGE. Mr. Speaker, today I pay tribute to the accomplishments and career of one of North Carolina's daughters, Mrs. Ruby Butler DeMesme. Mrs. DeMesme, a public servant of the highest order, recently retired from her post as Assistant Secretary of the Air Force for Manpower, Reserve Affairs, Installations and Environment after 32 years of service.

Mrs. DeMesme earned her bachelor of arts degree in English from Saint Augustine's College in Raleigh in 1969. Ten years later she earned a master's degree in social work from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. Before beginning her civil service career, Mrs. DeMesme was a highly recognized and respected expert on child and spousal abuse and adolescent programs for the Cumberland County Department of Social Services in Fayetteville.

Mrs. DeMesme's career in the federal work force began in 1980 as an Army adjutant and diversion chief in Mainz, West Germany, where she led the effort to improve family support and quality of life programs. In 1989, she left the Department of the Army and served as a senior aide to former Senator John Glenn. After leaving Capitol Hill, Mrs. DeMesme returned to the Army for a brief time until her move to the Department of the Air Force in 1991, where she would work until her retirement. She was appointed and confirmed to her current post on August 13, 1998.

Over her ten years with the Air Force, Mrs. DeMesme was responsible for increasing housing and station funding policies, establishing the military Transition Assistance Program, and working to ensure that the Air Force had the highest quality child development programs. She was also the catalyst behind the effort to revitalize communities affected by base closures and realignments, overhauled the military commissary and base exchange system, established policies regarding harassment and discrimination, and led the Department of Defense in military family housing privatization.

Mrs. DeMesme has touched the lives of thousands of people during her distinguished career and it is fitting that we honor her today. Ruby Butler DeMesme is a true patriot who has helped maintain the best military force in the world. Today, I thank her for her years of dedicated service to our brave men and women in uniform and wish the very best for her and her family in the years to come.

HUMAN RIGHTS IN COLOMBIA

HON. JANICE D. SCHAKOWSKY

OF ILLINOIS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, January 31, 2001

Ms. SCHAKOWSKY. Mr. Speaker, I submit the following article printed on the front page of the January 28, 2001 Washington Post. The article demonstrates a fundamental aspect of the growing human rights emergency in Colombia. It also details the role of paramilitary organizations in human rights violations taking place in Colombia and the complicity of the Colombian military and government in allowing human rights abuse, such as the Chengue massacre, to continue.

Despite the thousands of civilian deaths and millions of displaced people in Colombia, the United States has moved forward with a misguided policy of massive military aid and close involvement in Colombia's conflict. I strongly believe that our current policy under Plan Colombia is the wrong approach for our nation in dealing with Colombia and is certainly the most ineffective and insincere way to deal with our domestic drug problem.

CHRONICLE OF A MASSACRE FORETOLD

(By Scott Wilson)

CHENGUE, COLOMBIA.—In the cool hours before sunrise on Jan. 17, 50 members of the United Self-Defense Forces of Colombia marched into this village of avocado farmers. Only the barking of dogs, unaccustomed to the blackness brought by a rare power outage, disturbed the mountain silence.

For an hour, under the direction of a woman known as Comandante Beatriz, the paramilitary troops pulled men from their homes, starting with 37-year-old Jaime Merino and his three field workers. They assembled them into two groups above the main square and across from the rudimentary health center. Then, one by one, they killed the men by crushing their heads with heavy stones and a sledgehammer. When it was over, 24 men lay dead in pools of blood. Two more were found later in shallow graves. As the troops left, they set fire to the village.

The growing power and brutality of Colombia's paramilitary forces have become the chief concern of international human rights groups and, increasingly, Colombian and U.S. officials who say that 8,000-member private army pose the biggest obstacle to peace in the country's decades-old civil conflict.

This massacre, the largest of 23 mass killings attributed to the paramilitaries this month, comes as international human rights groups push for the suspension of U.S. aid to the Colombian armed forces until the military shows progress on human rights. The armed forces, the chief beneficiary of the \$1.3 billion U.S. anti-drug assistance package known as Plan Colombia, deny using the paramilitaries as a shadow army against leftist guerrillas, turning a blind eye to their crimes or supporting them with equipment, intelligence and troops.

But in Chengue, more than two dozen residents interviewed in their burned-out homes and temporary shelters said they believe the Colombian military helped carry out the massacre.

In dozens of interviews, conducted in small groups and individually over three days, survivors said military aircraft undertook surveillance of the village in the days preceding the massacre and in the hour immediately following it. The military, according to these accounts, provided safe passage to the paramilitary column and effectively sealed off the area by conducting what villagers described as a mock daylong battle with leftist guerrillas who dominate the area.

"There were no guerrillas," said one resident, who has also told his story to two investigators from the Colombian prosecutor general's human rights office. "There motive was to keep us from leaving and anyone else from coming in until it was all clear. We hadn't seen guerrillas for weeks."

A "DIRTY WAR"

The rutted mountain track to Chengue provides a vivid passage into the conflict consuming Colombia. Chengue and hundreds of villages like it are the neglected and forgotten arenas where illegal armed forces of the right and left, driven by a national tradition of settling political differences with violence, conduct what Colombians call their "dirty war."

Despite peace talks between the government and the country's largest guerrilla insurgency, more than 25,600 Colombians died violently last year. Of those, 1,226 civilians—a third more than the previous year—died in 205 mass killings that have come to define the war. Leftist guerrillas killed 164 civilians last year in mass killings, according to government figures, compared with 507 civilians killed in paramilitary massacres. More than 2 million Colombians have fled their homes to escape the violence.

In this northern coastal mountain range, strategic for its proximity to major transportation routes, all of Colombia's armed actors are present. Two fronts of the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC), the country's oldest and largest leftist guerrilla insurgency with about 17,000 armed members, control the lush hills they use to hide stolen cattle and victims of kidnappings-for-profit.

The privately funded United Self-Defense Forces of Colombia, known by the initials AUC in Spanish, patrols the rolling pastures and menaces the villages that provide the FARC with supplies. Paramilitary groups across Colombia have grown in political popularity and military strength in recent years as a counterweight to the guerrillas, and obtain much of their funding from relations with drug traffickers. Here in Sucre province, ranchers who are the targets of the kidnappings and cattle theft allegedly finance the paramilitary operations. AUC commander Carlos Castano, who has condemned the massacre here and plans his own investigation, lives a few hours away in neighboring Cordoba province.

The armed forces, who are outnumbered by the leftist guerrillas in a security zone that covers 9,000 square miles and includes more than 200 villages, are responsible for confronting both armed groups. Col. Alejandro Parra, head of the navy's 1st Brigade, with responsibility for much of Colombia's northern coast, said the military would need at least 1,000 more troops to effectively control the zones.

The military has prepared its own account of the events surrounding the massacre at

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